

Act, or we call it the CLEAR Act, gained the support of some 125 Members. Our purpose is fairly simple: State and local law enforcement personnel would be fully authorized to investigate, apprehend, and, if necessary, remove criminal aliens in the United States.

Already this year our Justice Department has asked for help from local law enforcement on this issue. According to Reuters News, the Bush administration now recognizes that, "The United States has freed numerous illegal aliens into the community who are dangerous murderers, rapists and child molesters under a legal loophole created by Supreme Court decisions, and that "Congress should urgently pass legislation to close this loophole, which has already resulted in the release of several extremely violent offenders, with others scheduled to be released soon."

According to the report, U.S. Justice Department Deputy Assistant Attorney General Jonathan Cohn made this request of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives on March 14.

We have the legislative draft to do just what they want, this year's pending version of the CLEAR Act. We plan to introduce the 2005 version within the next few weeks. We do welcome constructive input from the administration, from Members of both parties and members of both houses. But from what we have learned thus far from the Minuteman Project, the CLEAR Act cannot be a stand-alone remedy for stopping the hordes of vicious foreign criminals invading our country to murder, rape and molest Americans.

My one bill will not do it, not by itself. We can provide local and State law enforcement with the tools to remove these criminal elements through guaranteed deportation. We can help Homeland Security do their job. But it does little if they can simply pour back across unsecured borders. You have gotten nothing done.

The CLEAR Act, therefore, will become a critical component of overall immigration and border reform. I urge every Member in this body to join in this effort with the CLEAR Act. In return, I pledge to support whatever legislative measures that are necessary to secure our borders. That includes a total military closing, if necessary, to stop these criminals. I fully understand the meaning of "closing," even if it is a temporary closing. It is a time we in this body are going to be able to declare whose side are we on.

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Are we on the side of fellow Americans, or are we on the side of those of the new world order who want no borders? It is that simple. The vote will come down to just that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Miss McMORRIS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon

(Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

IN SUPPORT OF LIEUTENANT PANTANO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, today is the third day of the Article 32 hearing for Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, a Marine who I have talked about here on the floor at great length and who has served our Nation bravely in both Gulf wars.

In an action of self-defense a year ago in Iraq, Lieutenant Pantano made a split-second, battlefield decision to shoot two Iraqi insurgents who refused to follow his orders to stop their movement towards him. Two and a half months later, a sergeant under his command, who never even saw the shooting and who was earlier demoted for his lack of leadership abilities, accused him of murder. Because of that, Lieutenant Pantano today continues to face an Article 32 hearing where a hearing officer will determine whether he will face a court martial for two counts of premeditated murder.

Last night I described how yesterday's hearing came to a halt when it became apparent that Lieutenant Pantano's accuser, Sergeant Coburn, had recently violated his superior's orders not to give an interview on this case. The defense showed that he was interviewed for various media outlets, including last week's New York Magazine cover story on the case.

In fact, Sergeant Coburn may now face charges for disobeying orders, and he left the stand yesterday after the hearing officer recommended he get an attorney.

Madam Speaker, it seems obvious that this man's testimony cannot be considered credible. How can these charges move forward when the primary witness is someone who did not actually see the shooting and who may now face charges for disobeying serious orders about the case?

Let me also quote from Navy Medical Corpsman George Gobles, the only other person present at the time of the shooting, and the prosecution's other main witness who took the stand yesterday. He called Pantano "a damn good leader." He continued to testify:

"I felt the safest with, you know, this platoon because more than anything, because of Lieutenant Pantano, because of his leadership."

Madam Speaker, as I have said many times before, Lieutenant Pantano is by all accounts an exceptional Marine. I hope that yesterday's proceedings have finally begun to bring out the truth in this case. I pray that the end is near so that Pantano's family can put this behind them and move forward with their lives. I hope that in the next day or two, as this hearing ends, the hearing officer comes to the same conclusion that I and many like me have come to, that Lieutenant Pantano should never have been charged in the first place, and that all charges against him are dropped. I hope and I pray that the truth will prevail.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I continue to ask my colleagues to research the case and consider supporting House Resolution 167, my bill to help support Lieutenant Pantano as he faces this battle. I encourage them to visit his mother's Web site at www.defendthedefenders.org and learn more about this fine young Marine, and I would be proud to call him my son or my son-in-law.

I close by asking the good Lord in heaven to please bless Lieutenant Pantano and his family, and by asking the good Lord in heaven to please continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and I ask the good Lord in heaven to continue to bless America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.